

Distributed as a postmailing to the November '65 FAPA Mailing by Richard Schultz, 19159 Helen, Detroit (48234) USA. Also to be distributed with MASSIF #19, STAB #9. This story is written around material contained in previous material distributed in the above-mentioned Diplomacy fanzine. RIP.

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I was dressed in lounging pajamas and my faithful old ratty purple robe when the Countess first came to see me.

The chimes at Waltzkirche were marking the half hour, and I was just beginning to absorb all the old aromas and sights of my own home at the time. My first Ester cigar in four months was in my hand, Marie was knocking bowls about in the kitchen, Rudi was mucking about with his home-made wireless and the St. Jurgend Abendsprese was in my lap. I could feel the cares of the front lapping away from me. It was good to be home.

The knock was soft, a very polite knock, very hesitant and maybe a little unsure as to the necessity for this visit.

None of our relatives yet knew of my return, though I had naturally registered with the Provost's over in the Moislingerstrasse. While Rudi went to see to the visitor I decided that it must be one of my faithful comrades from the local police, who had rushed over upon hearing of my arrival in the city.

Instead I heard the voice of a woman, very hard on the R's like a Saxon, but cultured nonetheless.

Therefore I hid my horrid stocking cap and was politely standing when this stranger entered. She was a young matron, not over 46 or 47 according to the clear condition of her hands and neck. She was dressed in mourning black, a thick veil pulled back over her Viktoria Hat. On her extended hand, as I bowed to offer a gentlemanly kiss to it, I noticed a ring, an enameled ring, with a black and red striped shield quartered with a gold and red griffin.

Therefore I was able to ask, "You do me a great honor, Countess. What small service might I be able to perform for the Haus Moerser? You know of course, that I am serving on the Provost's at present, but if you wish I can contact you discreetly with Inspector Rathers....?"

But the Countess was adamant. She had come to see me, and no other. She expressed curiosity as to where we had met, but I assured her we had not done so. Her family crest, Riechard-Linensau, was on her ring, and as an Inspector of Lubeck Police, it was my job to keep myself informed of all occurrences within the locale...including the family trees of the cities wealthy potential victims as well.

I begged her to be seated, chasing Fritz off the Empire chair by the windows. As Rudi passed on towards the Kitchen, I gave him our signal indicating that I thought that this was a business call, and to be unobtrusive. Such a distinguished visitor so soon after my arrival back in Lubeck brooded trouble. I had gained an enviable reputation amongst my colleagues but not one to rate such a social call.

I quickly took her coat, the brisk autumnal airs radiating from the cold surface. We remarked for a moment on some of the latest occurrences at the front, the embezzlement scandal at the StadtBank, the new rise in land taxes. In a short while Rudi returned with the wine I had offered the Countess.

It was an '01 Latrices-Chambertin, but she said she would love it. It was very good at that. Very light, not at all springy or fruity. But after exchanging a few more pleasantries about cloths and the latest rationing decrees, I queried her on the black she was wearing.

She informed me that the Count had died two months ago, with the Lubeckner Rifles of which he has been Executive Officer for most of the course of the war. It was naturally, a great shock to her system when the War Office sent an officer from the Garrison to tell her that her only son had died, also in the East Prussian Front. I managed to discover that only yesterday the body had reached Lubeck. That the boy was to be buried in the family cemetery tomorrow.

I tried to console her as best as I could, and in time she quieted. A sense of balance is necessary in all things, after all. Even though I have viewed corpse-fields littered with entire regiments, it does no good to cry anew over each waste. Certainly the Kaiser was at fault, but no one can blame him entirely now for what is happening all over Europe....

The Countess finally went on and stated that mayhaps I hadn't heard, but her brothers had also died recently. It had been a trying period for her. But she assured me that she could still reason logically, she never had been prone to the faints or spells or for hearing things or seeing visions. Therefore it was a shock to find that her son was still alive!

She paused, and trying not to look astounded, I poured her another glass of the Burgundy.

I sipped quietly upon the Chambertin and looked out over St. Jurgend towards the irregular old wooden homes of thousands of Lubeckers. I toyed with the idea that her son might be a deserter, but tentatively discarded the idea. If he was, and she knew it, she would either have turned him over to the authorities, or turned the family drive and fortune to spiriting him out of the country.

Certainly I doubted if she would seek the services of an intermediary such as an ex-Inspector of Police.

Finally she started up again, just as Waltzkirch rang the hour. She downed the Burgundy in a most distressing manner, then went on with a most unusual story indeed.

A few days before, she had happened to meet an employee of her husband's ship's chandler's firm. They had met on the street, and as she had met him previously a number of times, she had stopped to say a word or two with him. He had accosted her as to the health of her son, after a few pleasantries. She had therefore told him that her own dear Jakob was dead and now in transit to be buried on Hohentern.

The employee had known Jakob from his days when he had clerked in his father's firm, and was an old friend of him. He was therefore astounded and told her that that could not be. He had seen Jakob on this very street, not four blocks from the Holstentor!

Upon inquiry he stated most emphatically that the person was the Jakob he knew and no other. He had answered Karl with his correct name and had inquired as to the health of the Head Clerk, who was known The Crocodile. Jakob had not acted at all well, he was dressed a little queerly, it seemed, and he looked as if he had been down with something in the immediate past. Jakob had said that he was on convalescent leave. After a few pleasantries, Jakob had left for the city proper, the island.

The clerk was sure of the dates, even when assumed by the Countess that it was the very day she received word of her son's death. She tried to convince him that he was mistaken, but he remained firm on the point of identity. He admitted that he didn't notice any scars on the right side of his face, though Jakob had caught some Austrian shrapnel at Goldap the year before.

The Countess finally left a very confused person. Since that date two other people had mentioned seeing Jakob, though neither had talked to him. One had said that he was very glad to see Jakob alive, as she had heard that he had been reported dead in East Prussia.

Even Fraulein Konner was sure that it was Jakob, though she had been on very good terms with him before he left for the front after his last leave. The person was of impeccable character, the Countess knew, for she had had her investigated, being a possible future wife for her son. The Fraulein Konner was not given to those pseudo-gentle-lady airs and giggles and other foolishnesses.

But the real shocker had come the other day.

After hearing these people, the Countess was not completely unsure as to the identity of the body coming on the train. While I was boarding my own leave train, she and two of her daughters were waiting to receive the casket of Jakob Moerser. The city's fourteenth-class reservists, those too essential to draft but fit enough to serve, had been formed into a Corporal's Guard with an officer to make the turning over formalities as proper as possible. The Kommandant of the City of Lubeck Fortress was on hand for such a distinguished dead, and assured her that he had taken all matters into his own hands and that her son would be buried with distinguished military honors as befitting one of Germany's glorious dead, etc., etc.

The Countess had not unbent through the long wait for the train or during the actual turning-over ceremonies. She finally requested to be left alone with her son for a moment in some room....

The casket was quickly wheeled into a small anteroom, and after a few quiet words, they left her alone with the now uncovered casket.

After a while, the Countess said that she recovered enough from her emotional outburst that she felt the presence of someone else in the room. She did not lift up her head, but merely began wiping her tears off her son's face, and asked the person to leave her alone.

The person did not do so, though a sob seemed to come from whoever it was. She heard a voice clearly say, "You are right. There is no place for me here."

It was her son's voice, as surely as if it were the corpse itself speaking! She whirled and instinctively clutched at the shadowed stranger, the dim light not hiding from her the fact that it was indeed her son!

It was not the resemblance of a freakishly nearly identical person to Jakob, not a twin, but Jakob himself! The curl of his lips, the way he held his body and his head and moved his hands, the off-balance curl of his lips. It was no copy, beyond a doubt, The Countess assured me, it was her Jakob.

This Jakob then held her close with an anguished sob, a moan as if from a creature in the uttermost depths of Hell. Then he kissed her on the cheeks and whispered that there was no place for him here, there was no returning. He had then turned, and despite her grabbing for him, he had succeeded in sprinting away and out of a door before she could get off her knees.

The Countess had screamed and fallen again and upon looking up from the floor, had seen the corridor was empty. She was lying there, crying and weeping and moaning hysterically for her Jakob when her daughters came in. Not until later, when she had cried herself out, did she realize that she had told no one of what she had seen in that very room. No one, apparently, had seen Jakob leave.

Recovering her senses, she made a very minute of the examination of the body, surreptitiously uncovering part of the sleeve to show a minor scar, gained in soccer one summer years ago. If nothing else, that alone convinced her.

Afterwards she had sent telegrams, with the authority of the Fortress Kommandant behind her. They were sent to the Company officers of her son's regiment. Also included were the platoon sergeant her son commanded.

They were all prompt in replying, and stated that it was indeed her son who had died there. The Sergeant reported that the Lieutenant was returning from a reconnaissance sortie into the Polish lines, when a no-man's land ambush had riddled the detail. The Lieutenant had been the only death, two others wounded. The Kapitän informed her that one of the wounded, a native of Schleswig, was being convalesced home from Königsberg, and could be ordered to see her if it was desired. She replied that it would not be necessary.

The Countess then turned to me, away from the window where she had been standing, and put two rings on the carafe in front of me.

I examined the one very closely. Simply a gold ring, a small crest below a twisted roll, an obvious heirloom of the family. The motto was unreadable, from long wear, though the inscription "P.F. tu M.", probably from Jakob's great-grandfather Peter, the one who made a fortune in Baltic timber.

I picked up the other and almost dropped them both! They were not only identical, but identical even after prolonged examination. They had the same amount of wear, the same scratch pattern, as my magnifying glass proved to my satisfaction, the only difference being a gouge in the motto of one and the tip of the other's crest being almost entirely gone. It was if both rings had been worn on the same finger on the same hand through three generations and then separated not a year or less ago.

There was a flick in roll of one that was identical on both. Not just close but identical.

I looked at the Countess inquiringly. She said that the one on the table is off the ring finger of her son, the one lying in a casket in state in the family home. The other one came off the ring finger of her son...the other Jakob, the visitor in the railroad

station. Or whoever it was who she had tussled with there.

"Inspector," she said, "it was my son that I saw there, who spoke to me, who broke away from me there. The anguish in his own voice was real, if it was, why did he leave? And yet... And yet... Yet it is indeed, undeniably, my own beloved son who is lying in state at Haus Moerser at this very moment. When I leave here, I shall go back to sit by his coffin. Inspector.... Inspector, you must help me!!"

* * * * *

My frugal nature revolted a little at the thought of keeping the hackney coach waiting, but in this neighborhood I tended to agree with the Countess as to the necessity for time, rather than economy. Still, it felt expansive to be able to peel off a green-note fiver and tell the top-hatted old cabbie to wait. He looked about uneasily at the dingy surroundings but sat back anyways.

Stepping stones still connected the middles of the blocks, as they had since medieval times. A greasy water ran down the center gutter, and a starveling dog scurried across a doorstep nearby. The entire area reeked of tea and machine oil and rotting wood. I could hear the shrill creaking of the cranes on the river, but it still almost seemed as if at any moment the Night Watch, with their lead-studded poles, would come sweeping around a corner, hollering "'Ware, Ware, Curfew for all honest men!"

According to Wee Willie, Hermann and Henri were still in residence here in Wagneralle. Their living, as usual, lay in applying their knowledges and skills for a price to the inhabitants of the port. Most often they operated with the law, of course, but not always. Hermann had once said to me that they could afford to move out to the suburbs, but why, when their contacts and clientele would have to go so much farther to see them.

Once inside the ill-lit vestibule, I rang the upstairs chain and smilingly stared at where I knew their hole in the ceiling lay. "Relax, Henri. It's only your dear enemy, Inspector Drees! Come and let me in before I condemn this rat-trap!"

Some noises burst from overhead and within seconds someone was running down the stairs to the door and tore it open. Henri pulled me in, pounding me furiously on the back and gazing at my pearl-gray uniform and casually frisking me for arms. Hermann upbraided him for doing so, but I told them it felt like old home week to be greeted in the usual manner. I assured them that my intentions were in no way injurious to their usual nefarious pasttimes, but rather profitable.

Hermann ushered me into the overstuffed chair by the glowing coals and Henri quickly dashed out for a bottle of wine. Within a few minutes a glass of a dark red was in each of our hands, and Hermann toasted the future.

Henri said that there was an Argentine tramp leaving for the United States tomorrow, if I had taken Bavarian leave from the Reichswehr. Hermann added that there was a regular ferry service out of Travemunde to Sweden, dealing in black market goods if all I wanted to do was to get out of the country.

I then told them that I'd expect them to follow up both of those methods of leaving the country. They sat stunned for a moment, then Hermann asked, "Who is he, or she?"

He had already deduced that someone might leave and want to go far, and that I didn't want that someone to go. I laid my case on the end table and sipped my wine. It was a very good Burgundy, and I said so.

"Richebourg '03," Henri said. "A little matter of a blonde, a blackmailer and the French consul. The blackmailer is no doubt regretting the error of his ways, between Russian bullets," he added.

While Hermann shuffled the wads of banknotes and Henri stared at the photographs of the young Jakob, I added that it is marvelous what the prospect of a vacation at Grosswerten or Lauenberg will make a man volunteer for.

I explained that the photographer Lippemann will have approximately five hundred groups of photographs of this young man available for use by eight this night. They were to seek out this man within the city, and cover and block the exits, especially those out of the country. Purchase of forged exit visa's and foreign passports was to be especially checked.

For the moment, the Polozei were not to know of this. If recognized, the only information to be given is that the person is an imposter, an extorter with a very good resemblance to the Countess' Moerser's now dead son. As they might have noticed, the body arrived the other day, and is at state in MoerserHaus.

Henri recited from his phenomenal memory, "Died five days ago in East Prussia, according to reports. Is this person we are seeking the real son, or an imposter?" To which I replied that the Countess is absolutely sure that her son lies in that bronze casket. I did not add that she was equally sure as to the identity of the person who she had faced in the Bahnhof waiting room.

The money was operating expenses in the search, with another 5000 ReichsMarks as bounty money for finding the lad. The lad, we'll call him Jakob for convenience's sake, has quite a good deal of money, though the amount is uncertain.

It had been quite a surprise to the Countess to come back and find a family chest unearthed, in an obscure corner of the yards, underneath an alabaster cupid.

The mystery had deepened, for the Countess thought no one but herself and the Count knew of the box, which was stuffed with Swiss Francs and gold sovereigns.

Naturally the foreign currency should give a lead to Jakob, if he dared spend them. The Polozei would probably also be interested in anyone having possession of gold coinage and foreign notes, so discretion and speed was essential.

Wee Willie had already stated that someone was looking for very good papers, in the western part of the Island of Lubeck. Someone who looked the part.

Henri and Hermann promised to find the lad, if he was still in the city, and follow him if he left. I let them know that after finding him, the ultimate decision as to whether to turn him over to the Polozei would have to rest with the Countess.

With 10,000 RM to work with, I knew that by midnight Lubeck's underworld would be alive with eyes, all looking for one man. In the meantime I had some investigating of my own to do. The Countess was just simply too positive about the identicalness of the two Jakob's.

* * * * *

I was waiting on the stoop, as the small man trudged north towards me. The Professor Frey lived in a small flat on the BoelerAllee, just off the GlocklandStrasse. Here, under the brooding bell tower of the Jakobkirche, the Professor lived a solitary life, in the midst of the medieval plaster-and-wood medieval houses of the AlteStadt. A gas light sputteringly burned two houses town and did little more than blanket the sight of the stars. A night patrol of one Polozei and one StadtReichsGehimePolozei wandered by, the Reservist saluting my silver tabs. They stopped for a moment and examined my papers in a perfunctory manner, after identifying the Provost colors on my collar.

As the Professor turned to enter his domicile, I introduced myself. I had already recognized the Professor from a photograph of him available at the Lubeck Universtate Physical Sciences building. With the rest of the permanent staff, his picture decorated a wall there.

Up in his flat, the Professor invitted me to make myself comfortable, while he changed. I gave the room a quick frisk while he explained that he worked an evening shift in a machine and chemicals plant over on DammStrasse. Duty calls every patriot, you know, he commented. His library was crammed with unpronounceable books crammed in their own turn with notes, scraps of paper and the erratta of a bookish man. Off to the side lay an unlighted laboratory, in which I recognized a few sizable electro-magnets, and a wall of flasks and the unnameable glass crockery of which the chemist is so fond.

When he returned, in his bathrobe and slippers, and offered me a cigarette, I was sitting by the window. I took one of his Astor's, and looked out the leaded glass. A few young men, dressed in the light blue overalls common to the ammunition industry, were walking towards the old Hanseatic warehouse which housed the Medical Building of the Universtate. They were probably coming from the Karberger-FineWerke on the EinsiedelStrasse, a few looked like students. The war was sweeping everyone up in its maw, it seemed. Even the students have to do something to keep their deferrement. The meatgrinder had an insatiable appeptite.

Rimless octangular spectacles gleamed on the Professor's forehead, as he lay back into the familiar contours of the overstuffed chair. Helifted an eyebrow at me and asked finally what my business was, with a mere Professor at the University. He folded his multi-colored hands across his lap, the years of chemical analyses giving his fingers an unreal look even in the dim gas light.

I introduced myself again, as an ex-Inspector of Police. The Professor didn't know me, but he tipped his head slightly at the mention of the word Inspector. His circles just didn't run in the same areas as mine.

He did however know the young Jakob. On that point everyone was sure. The Professor admitted it, and stated that Jakob was one of the most brilliant students to ever pass through his ministering hands.

The Professor shook his head sadly then and said, "I knew something was very, very wrong as soon as I saw him".

Upon query, the Professor told a very unusual story. As is usual, the Professor ascended to the loft over the Physics Laboratory four times a year to check on the laboratory stock there. While there, the door to the east wing's loft burst open, and Jakob stood there shouting for the Professor.

The Professor knew very well that Jakob was in the Army, somewhere in the EastFront, he thought. So the spectre of a pistol-waving Jakob completely unnerved him. He burst in and asked where the equipment, the Transporter and the Pusher was.

I came awake at this, a wild strange idea suddenly burning in my mind. But the Professor continued his story.

The youth seemed much as he had on his last leave, but the spectacle of Jakob coming from a room which the Professor had only moments before checked out, dumbfounded him. Here was Jakob, dressed in civilian clothes, waving a pistol and saying, "Don't you understand? I have killed him, we have succeeded, why then have you hidden the equipment?"

The Professor remained silent as Jakob asked where the giant coils and the build-up chambers were. The boy had remained incoherent and had become violent as Frey finally managed to state that he did not know what he was talking about.

Jakob had then staggered back, and sat down abruptly upon a trunk holding glassware for the laboratories below. He let the pistol dangle from his fingers and moaned and cried. The Professor tried to comfort Jakob and asked him what was wrong.

Everything, the youth had replied. Jakob had then asked the most nonsensical questions, such as who the Kaiser was.

The Professor answered, and then suspicion awakening in his mind, asked him why he wasn't with his regiment at the front.

I looked at the Professor and he continued his story. No doubt the Professor realized he should have reported his suspicions to the Military Police, but what was past is past. It is immutable.

Jakob had questioned the Professor closely about this front, then about the war, asking the most astonishing questions as to who Germany was supposed to be fighting. Jakob had then left from the room, taking the pistol with him, and dashing down the stairs and outside towards St. Jugend.

Then, just yesterday, Jakob had come up to him on the street. He had evidently been waiting for him, for he drew him into an alley and questioned him extensively on, of all things, scientific theory!

Afterwards, after the confusing exchange, the boy had again left and had not reappeared. He had heard that night of the arrival of the body of the youth at his parent's manor, but had been afraid to go to see the lad for what he might find.

I laid his mind to rest with the notion that the boy was indeed dead and lying in state, but someone who looked like Jakob had been seen about town, and had apparently gotten quite a good deal of money from the Moerser family.

The Professor immediately assumed that it was a clever ~~thieving~~ double, and that I was merely working quietly to recover same. Which was why no notice was out about the lad.

I asked the Professor what the young man had questioned him about, and received a long dissertation instead.

Frey started out by questioning whether I had heard of a Dane called Bohr, who had revealed a number of interesting theories about the ultimate state of matter. When I admitted my ignorance of such esoteric scientific matters as atoms, the Professor explained how they were assumed to be the ultimately tiny building blocks from which all things are built.

Jakob had been a brilliant student, and followed this thinking with ease, though his real forte lay in electrical mechanics and electrical theory. But it was Frey himself who was the physicist, and who explained everything to the young Jakob so he could understand.

I tried to follow the Professor, but it had been many years since my own years at the University, and many theories before.

Frey pointed out that Bohr had found much of the truth, in his theories on the state and composition of matter. But there were gaping holes in his logic or his theories. The Professor was sure that the holes were in the incompleteness of Bohr's theories, rather than any fault in the logic itself.

The Professor had eventually decided that one way of explaining the conflicting and unexpected phenomena in the actions of matter lay both in the existence of hitherto undreamed of sub-particles and in a semantic misconception introduced by Bohr himself.

For Bohr assumed that the negatively and positively charged particles revolving about a solid nucleus were in fact ultra-minute particles. Frey assumed that they were streaks of energy, rather. Later on he toyed with the idea that they were waves, completely wrapping the nucleus, rather than even streaks.

These wavicles were states of energy, simply given a plus or minus sign by nature or accident.

To fill the gaps in this atomic theorem, the Professor had theorized a number of sub-sub-particles, which regulated and changed the signs and states of the outer and inner shells of the atom. In some of his more wild flights of imagination, the Professor had wondered on the logical existence of such sub-sub-particles as positive acting bits of negative electrons, negative acting bits of positive electrons, slow and fast and ultra-fast and ultra-small sub-sub-sub-particles, a whole wheat field of remnants of inter-atomic interactions. He said that a cloud chamber showed occasionally the eccentric antics of such strange bits, or waves, though their own paths could not be realized. He had had an interesting idea once on how to photograph such things, but the war came then, and he never had any time to go any further.

One though, he thought, would be able to exist in two places at the same time, and another would be so slow moving that it would not appear to exist at all. These and the others would constantly colliding with other atoms and unbalancing them and forcing them to shoot off bits themselves. Once unbalanced, the atom would have to shoot off more wavicles until the outer and/or inner shells would balance again. This he presumed accounted for most of the effects of the cloud chamber and other such electron detecting devices.

The whole field was entrancing, but the war had come, Jakob had become a Lieutenant in the Reichswehr, and the Professor had taken up a highly technical analysis position at a fine shop not too far away. There were a number of experiments the Professor would have like to have tried, and mayhaps even more theories beyond these. But the War had come.... Everything these days was excused by The War. One could not even get electro-magnets these days, and getting special equipment built was out of the question.

Jakob could have probably built some of the electron-magnets for him, equipment able to grasp and then speed up electrons to the point where their special characteristics would register when they were shot towards a camera or cloud-chamber device of some sort.

Jakob as a matter of fact, had asked the Professor questions as to what he knew of the matter of sub-particles and their actions and what equipment I had to test them. Naturally the Professor said that he knew nothing, only had a few theories, and no empirical data or equipment to gain it.

Frey said that his admission of lack of knowledge in these matters had saddened Jakob extraordinarily. He had stated, "You were the only one who knew, you know. You had gone far beyond me, I merely worked on what vistas your own brain opened up to you."

After this quizzical statement, and with tears streaming down his face, the lad stalked swiftly away, towards the Trave.

The Professor's talk had sounded close to witchcraft at times, with his waves traversing all solid matter like it was air, his waves traversing time by being in multiple places at the same time, his linkages holding matter together emitting weaker particles which formed the basis of matter.

So, I asked him if he might not have at some time attempted to achieve one of the alchemic dreams of duplication of matter? The idea was preposterous in itself, but as that English fellow had said, when only the impossible remains, it is not impossible, after all. I understand he had some sort of accident the next year, when he returned to Richenbach Falls, but at the time the Provost had requested me to help in the criminal division, and I had never been able to follow the matter up.

The Professor laughed and stated that theoretically a person could be duplicated. But to do so would be akin to duplicating the city of Lubeck itself with present engineering methods.

Not just a close duplicate, mind you, but an exact duplicate. One would have to pick a moment in time, and before it could change, duplicate it. Down to the last chip in each brick, the smallest crack in each cobble, down to each weed trailing under each pier in the entire city, the refuse drifting down the Trave and the handkerchief in the pocket of a clerk in a store in Nord St. Lorenz! All in an instant, because in the next instant, it'd be changed. The people would move, the coal would burn, the wine would be drunk, and your duplicate would only be a "near" duplicate. That would be the problem involved in duplicating a person, only in a much greater magnitude, because the human body is composed of billions of cells and each cell itself has an almost infinite complexity of molecules and atoms within. And what to keep the rest together while you go on to duplicate the next cell? It would be impossible.

Upon stronger questioning, the Professor stated that he imagined that in a world where man could talk authoritatively about things he cannot even see, nothing is impossible. But it would be more probable that man will learn to fly by flapping his wings then for a single cell be reproduced exactly. In other words, not very.

Nevertheless, as I left the Professor to his well-earned repose, I determined to investigate the Professor further. The whole ridiculous situation of actually identical persons could be solved if by some nearly magical feat the Professor had accidentally or purposely duplicated Jakob at some time in the past. It smacked of Possession, or some other cultist claptrap, but I had best not leave any stone unturned in this case.

Mistaken identity I was sure it was not. There was undubitably something fantastically bizarre about this case.

* * * * *

A call was waiting for me when I finally crept up to my rooms. Marie and Rudi were asleep, but had left a note that I was to see a certain Cornflower Kerris, on the DelPortaAlle, number 12. Henri was going there almost immediately himself, and would meet me there. I quickly washed my face and re-buttoned my tunic and let myself back outside. Henri and Hermann must have found out something pretty important!

* * * * *

The sign read Fine Engraving and Printing Done To Your Specifications. But the street reeked of wine, petrol and disinfectant. It didn't seem to fit into this kind of dismal setting at all.

A ringing of the nightbell brought someone to the door, who opened for me. Henri motioned me in, and lighted the way through the shop, past the presses, now silent and smelling of ink and cleanser, to an enclosed room way in the back.

Here I found a wizened little old prune, a veritable mummified relic of some by-gone age, slumped back onto an ancient chaise lounge propped up with pillows and blankets. Henri introduced me to Cornflower, and said that I was the one looking for the young man.

He cackled, and said that he had been sure that the young man was some sort of deserter, when he asked for good papers.

Henri was quite contemptuous of the man, saying that they had discovered him trying to pass off a large box of British gold sovereigns, along with a small packet of Swiss Francs. If he had exchanged them at a bank, he probably would never have been discovered, but instead had attempted to evade the Reich Registry act and income tax laws by dumping them in the underworld.

Under the threat of Grosswertan, Kreiss talked readily, and grudgingly admitted that he had on occasion fitted select persons with first-quality forged documents, though he had informed the Secret Branch of most of them when the war started, and had continued doing so throughout the war. After first collecting, of course, for the papers.

The lad had purchased two sets, one of a Dutch citizen with the appropriate passport and travel visas, and the other for a citizen of Argentina, a business agent for a beef exporter. The Dutch papers had contained a photograph of him blond with dark clothes. But the Argentine had shown him brunette, with a light moustache, and out-dated clothes.

Disguised! Of course!

Henri added that as soon as he had heard of this, he had spread the news of Jakob's disguise, and expected news of his whereabouts quickly. At any rate, he had still been in Lubeck not four hours ago, and still blond. How the hair trick then? Probably shoe black for the first photograph, and permanent dye by now.

The trail was growing hot.

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Once more, as I started up my scrubbed neat stone steps, I saw that I was not to receive my by now well-earned rest. Hermann came up to the kerb and motioned me inside his cab. I reluctantly joined him in the two-seater and listened to him as he told the story. The destination I soon discovered was the Bahnhof, and that Hermann had tickets for us both on the early morning local to Travemunde.

Hermann informed me that a person answering Jakob's description had left a pensionen in Sud St. Lorenz that night. It was not an underworld hideout, which is why it took so long to discover. The Lubeck underworld is not so large that a man can disappear in it very easily. But Jakob had managed for 48 hours by the simple device of staying at a respectable pensionen. He walked with a limp... Hermann found pads in a drawer which made him believe that Jakob had inserted one in the heel of one shoe to force him to limp. His Identity Card was in order, and she thought nothing of the fact that he was named Moerser. After all, he didn't seem to be rich or a noble.

After madly threading our way through the streets, while Hermann talked, we eventually arrived at the Bahnhof. Hermann told me of what he had found here, thanks to the alert mind of one of the sneak thieves who frequent the railway station.

By the time he introduced me to a tall blond man dressed in a thick sweater and cap and heavy pants, I knew a lot about him. The pervert Daniella was strictly a professional criminal. He had been in and out of Lauenberg a half dozen times, usually for some for of theft though once he had proved his infallible detection senses about policemen to be fallible by propositioning a young detective for an indecent act.

A mixed odour of perfume and Hennessey hung over him, as we bundled into our compartment. Not a moment too soon, for the train gave a lurch and we were off, north along the Trave to the Baltic.

It seemed that Daniella, in his usual manner of seizing up potential careless types who might be detached from their luggage or wallet, had noticed a youngmilitary-age type, with an extremely well-filled wallet, mixed Swiss Francs and ReichsMarks. While trying to think of a notion that might make the bundle exchange hands, Daniella noticed something extraordinary. He had no luggage at all, nothing. And the back of his collar was quite dirty.

It was then that he thought the hair might be dyed, and leaped to the conclusion that he might be a detective!

But then he noticed that the lad seemed to be as nervous about the squads of Military Polozei as Daniella was. In a flash he had recognized Jakob underneath his moustache and black hair.

He knew a small fortune was being offered for information on the lad, but how to collect? He hardly dared turn his eyes away from him, for fear that 5,000 RMs would disappear into the next train. He presumed he had good papers or he wouldn't be wandering around where the Provost could pick him up (with no slur intended to your branch, Daniella said).

The answer came in the form of an almost inconspicuous fat man known as Luxembourger Dan. Dan was a small time retailer for stolen and smuggled goods, who had managed to gain a certain amount of fame in his line by being lucky or smart enough to keep out of jail for the past eight years. The astounding longevity as a peddler of hot goods was attributed a good deal to his miraculous ability to blend into the background almost instantaneously. Reversible coats and caps and a rubber expression helped.

Daniella quickly explained the whole matter to Luxembourger Dan and offered to split the reward fifty-fifty with him, if he would tail the young man in question.

Dan had been happy to do so, and they had worked out an arrangement whereby Dan tailed Jakob, and Daniella went and contacted Henri or Hermann.

Dan had only just sent back a telegram from Travemunde, then from Brodten, where Jakob had gotten off the train. I agreed with Daniella and Hermann that more than likely this beach resort was the place where he probably would be ferried across to Denmark or Sweden by some smuggler. At Brodten, Dan had lodged at the local PostHaus, but Jakob had taken up night residence, evidently, in one of the small summer houses along the dune road.

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The fat man introduced himself as Luxembourger Dan. Daniella had brought a small pot of kaffee and a bottle of spirits, which Dan gratefully took. It had been a task finding Dan, as he had staked himself near the Moerser summer cottage all night long, to prevent half of 5,000 RMs from slipping away in some little dinghy.

Dan complained that he had almost frozen out there on the dunes, but the quarry was still there.

He gave me a spy glass and pointed towards a small partially ruined wharf jutting out into the cold windy Baltic. The spy glass revealed a coated figure sitting out there, just staring out over the grey waves.

I told Dan to go back to the PostHaus and send Hermann on to us, Daniella would cover me. Luxembourger Dan handed Daniella a five-shot revolver of some kind, much like the Webley, and trudged off towards the miniscule village of Brodten.

I, myself, climbed down the dune and onto the track around the dune. It was time I received a few answers from this mysterious Jakob, or whoever it was.

No doubt, come summer, these beaches would be filled with vacationers and week-enders. With their endless kinder, young desperate lovers, accordions, beer and bicycles and muscle-bound acrobats. Today the November wind cut cruelly through my pearl-gray greatcoat, I had to hold my cap on during the quick gusts.

Jakob did not turn around when I stood beside him, though he had heard my boots on the slate of the stone jetty. He seemed unarmed, though I remembered that pistol the Professor had talked about.

"Hello, Jakob. Do you want to tell me about it?"

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He reacted like a man struck a body blow, the air went all out of him, and he turned pale.

For a little while he still did nothing, he just stared out over the Baltic. Then he turned back and looked behind us. Maybe he saw Daniella on top of the dune, maybe not. At any rate he said, "I suppose you've got someone back there covering me, don't you?"

I decided to sit down beside him, act natural and friendly. I said, "I'm from your mother, Jakob. So far the Police know nothing about this. But your mother is sure you are her son and for some odd reason I think you are too. Tell me, did the Professor induce you to be somehow duplicated, a few years back? One to go to the wars, the other to continue living about Europe?"

"Duplicate? Yes, I suppose you might think so. In a way you might say you're right, but not really. Instead let me tell you a story." He curled up against a pier and commenced telling me one of the oddest stories I've ever run across.

"Many years ago, Professor Leopold Frey learned of new theorems in the ideas of what constitutes matter... Have you talked to the Professor? He doesn't seem so, but he has a fantastic mind, capable of bridging one hypothesis with logic to another and even further away theorem. These rare jumps of logic in which someone seems something that is not readily seeable, is probably where most of our great ideas have come from. Sort of like adding two and two and coming up with one-hundred and forty-four. There is a pattern of logic which connects one group of data with an almost completely different theory, but it is usually only connected after years of filling in the gaps. Frey was able to bridge these gaps at a single bound, a sort of seven-league boots mind.

"In my second year at the Universtate, my father, the Count decided to finance a number of experiments and equipment purchases by the Professor. Father entered into a few legal arrangements with the Professor in which he would have first chance to use and purchase any usable techniques, ideas or patents which might result from the work. Actually the Count was just financing my interest in the hard physical sciences.

"Father had nothing against me being a scientist, too many fortunes had been made by scientific discoveries for him to sneer at what seemed useless theoretical scientific research.

"After a number of years, the Professor had leaped across one of these gaps between data and conclusion to develop a theorem concerning one of the probable types of wavicles which make up the space we live in. This one had the ability to be in two places at the same time, as far as we could see. From this the Professor deduced something he called the Gravitron, which was an extremely attenuated wave-particle whose "friction" was the effect which bound other matter together, namely gravity. He could think of no way of testing the Gravitron, but he deduced the existence of another friction-creating device which had effect on time. We introduced a frictionless cell into the "time stream" to test this one. It brought us unexpected results.

"We introduced... a wild factor. What we discovered we had was a gateway. According to how much "washing" we performed on the field within the electro-magnets, we could send it back. We collected quite a number of wonderful things through it. But the Professor wondered if we could go the same way.

"Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, we could. We brought back a history book from the far future.

"It was only by merest chance that we discovered that it was alive with radium particles, dangerous to man and beast. Nevertheless, after many cleansing operations, we decided the book was usable. We wondered how the book had gotten that way, though at the time we did not know that it was a history book.

141 was an unbelievable story we read there, a history full of horror and hope.

Do the words Ghermin Titov or Albert Einstein fill you with hope? Or the words Dmitriv Suslov or Adolf Hitler fill you with terror?

Does Stalingrad or Chateau Thierry or Auschwitz or Hiroshima fill you with any emotions?

They do to me. The last named filled us both with an unholy dread, so much so that we had to look through this world of the book again.

In that world there is no Lubeck, my good Sir. There is only a tranquil lake, three miles or four kilometres across. The sides are smooth glass and the very air made me sick for weeks afterwards. There was not so much as a blade of grass showing. It was a dead world.

We were able to move the equipment to another place, this one further south, near the Vierland, the rich farmlands of the Elbe. The Professor looked through this time, and he lost great patches of his hair as a result. There was a road there, it was lined with fantastic machines. Great armoured monsters, vehicles carrying tons and tons of armoured plating, guns of the same size and length as our medium field howitzers, weighing over seventy English tons and capable of reaching speeds of eighty kilometres an hour, the book said. The road was lined with them and all about lay skeletons, with their weapons in their hands, steel helmets on their skulls, lying at peace as if they had just laid down to rest. All the vegetation had the look of matter long dead. There was no green thing there, the very grass had died. And yet, from the rusted conditions of the steel monsters and the weapons, the Professor estimated it must have occurred decades ago.

That is why we decided to send me back.

We could not let such a world, a planetary graveyard, come to pass. We had to change history.

So I went back and killed the man who sent the Revolutionary World of France into a continental Empire, the great First Citizen, the Emperor of the French.

Oh, I killed him all right. You say though, that he lived? Yes, you might think that.

But the man I killed was an engineer in Louis XV's Army, a man called Jacques Berolli, the man who almost conquered the world. Here you have never even heard of him. Why not, after all I killed him while he was still a young cadet. No one ever heard of him. So here instead of Boos-Boos, you have Bielefeld. Here you have heaped corpses in Saxony instead of Picardy.

And I have no place here. In my world there was not forty-one million men under arms, no great armies marching and counter-marching from Siberia to Morocco. It is a nightmare world you live in, as bad as anything envisioned in the history book I read. Maybe somewhere there is still a world where Jacques Berolli marched the Grand Armee to Moscow. But I am here and this world's Professor Frey cannot build me a device to send me back, because he does not know how.

How can he send me back when he does not even know the effects of a neutertroen? What could be worse?

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I will have to think of something to tell the Countess, probably that he was an imposter. But he will be gone to America in a few hours. Forever. There is no place for him here. He killed Berolli but Deurchamps took his place. Maybe if Deurchamps one of his Marshall would take his place. Murat, Ney, DeChess, Napoleon....

The Baltic breeze was chilly today.....

—THE END—